



Your Voice Matters:

Young People Speak Out on
Issues Related to
the UN Special
Session on
Children



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Ce document est aussi offert en français sous le titre :
*Votre voix compte : Les jeunes parlent des questions liées à la session
spéciale des Nations Unies sur les enfants*

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Cat. N° H39-334/2001E

ISBN 0-662-31270-8

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**Young People Speak Out on
Issues Related to the UN Special
Session on Children**

*Survey Report
National Child Day*

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
How did we do this?	2
What children and adolescents said.	3
Participation	3
Fair Treatment and Anti-Discrimination	4
Poverty: Food, Clothing and Housing	5
Peace and Safety	6
Environment	7
Other Issues	8
Appendix A - Graphs and Charts of Responses by Topic.	11
Participation	11
Fair Treatment/Anti-Discrimination	14
Food, Clothing and Housing/Anti-Poverty	17
Peace and Safety/Peace and Security	20
Environment	23
Other Issues	26
Appendix B - Questionnaires	29

I ntroduction

On 20 November 1989, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Convention spells out the basic human rights to which children everywhere are entitled. The Convention protects these rights by setting minimum standards for the survival, growth and protection of children. Canada ratified the Convention on December 13, 1991.

In 1993, the Government of Canada enacted Bill C-371, otherwise known as the *Child Day Act*. The purpose of this legislation was to designate November 20th of each year as a national day of the child in order to promote awareness in Canada of the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC). The date was specifically chosen to commemorate two historic events: the adoption of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* on November 20th, 1959 and the adoption of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* on November 20th, 1989.

Since 1994, Health Canada has provided leadership for National Child Day through the development and dissemination of educational and promotional materials to encourage schools, community groups, families and others who work with children across the country to mark this day.

In adherence to Article 12 of the CRC, which “assures to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child”, the Government of Canada places a priority on the participation of young people and their involvement in issues that are of importance to them. At the upcoming United Nations Special Session on Children, world leaders will agree to a 10-year plan of action to address the rights of children around the world. The meaningful involvement of children and adolescents at the national and international levels is essential to ensuring the credibility and success of Special Session preparations. The Special Session originally scheduled to be held September 19 to 21, 2001, has been postponed to May 8 to 10, 2002.

For National Child Day 2000 Health Canada developed an interactive website to provide children and adolescents with an opportunity to express their views about their priorities and thoughts on issues related to the United Nations Special Session on Children. This online consultation initiative was carried out from November 20th, 2000 to May 1st, 2001. The results of the Health Canada National Child Day initiative are presented in this report.

These results will be presented to the Canadian delegation prior to the Special Session and will complement the Save the Children Canada report, *A Canada Fit for Children* - which also reports on consultations with children and adolescents.

How did we do this?

The National Child Day initiative consisted of a questionnaire posted on an interactive Health Canada website. The questionnaire was made up of three questions - two multiple choice and one open-ended - on five topics which are included on the agenda for the United Nations Special Session on Children:

- participation
- fair treatment/anti-discrimination
- food, clothing and housing/anti-poverty
- peace and safety, and
- environment

A final open-ended question asked the respondents to identify any other issues that concerned them.

Questionnaires were developed to solicit responses from three age groups: children (ages 5-8); pre-teens (ages 9-12); and teens (ages 13-18). Although the same topics were used for all three age groups, the questions were modified to address comprehension levels in each of the three age groups.

The National Child Day initiative was on-line from National Child Day, November 20, 2000, to May 1, 2001. The initiative was closed on this date so that the responses could be consolidated and a report prepared for consideration in the negotiations leading up to the United Nations Special Session on Children. It was promoted through posters distributed to organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, the Canadian Principals' Association, school boards, teachers' associations and other relevant non- governmental organizations.

A wide variety of responses were received for the open-ended questions. For the purposes of this report, they were consolidated under general headings with the number of responses indicated. This initiative was not a random sample survey but an opportunity for children and youth, with access to the Internet, to voluntarily send their opinions and suggestions to the Government of Canada. No information of a personal nature was collected from individuals who visited the website (name, address, etc.), nor was any personal information collected automatically from website visitors. To reflect this, a section entitled *Your Privacy* that included disclaimers and privacy information, was posted and accessible to all visitors.

Health Canada cannot know if the ages reported by the respondents are correct, nor if the respondents were only Canadians. The information we received from young people is rich and enlightening. Responses show that society should take the time to gather data and opinions from young people in Canada - they have plenty to say, and we have plenty to learn.

What children and adolescents said

There were 1,469 responses submitted of which approximately 10% self-identified as children (ages 5-8), 40% as pre-teens (ages 9-12), and 50% as teens (ages 13-18). This section will provide an overview of the responses from all respondents in each of the theme areas. For a more detailed review of the responses received, see Appendix A. Questionnaires are attached in Appendix B.

Participation

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children and youth have civil rights to participate in society, such as expressing their views freely without discrimination, about matters concerning their lives and future. This right also means that, if they choose to contribute, children and youth's views and opinions need to be heard and considered, when decisions are made that concern them.

"Teens should be involved in decision-making on things that involve them directly. At the age of 16, I feel as though I'm mature enough to be an active Canadian citizen, and yet, I can't voice my opinions without the fear of being ignored."

"Adults should listen to children because their point of view is very important and they could make a difference."

Within the theme of participation, respondents were asked about their opinions on child and youth participation in decision-making. Is it important to young people that they be involved in decision-making on issues that are important to them? Do they feel that they are listened to? Young people were also asked for ways that they think would provide them with opportunities to express their views.

The majority of respondents in each of the three age categories expressed that it is important for children and youth to be listened to, and to be involved in decision-making on issues that are important to them. 71% of children, 79% of pre-teen and 64% of teen respondents identified that children and youth should be involved in decision-making and be listened to.

"Our ideas are worth something. We may not be the oldest but we do know a lot of stuff older people don't or that they have forgotten."

Across all age categories, most young people stated that children and youth are *sometimes* listened to. However, 5% of children, 29% of pre-teens and 51% of teens said they were *rarely* or *never* listened to. The proportion of respondents who feel that their ideas were respected decreased with age, with 33% of children, 28% of pre-teen, and only 12% of teen respondents feeling their ideas are respected.

When asked whether there were ways that young people could be given a fair chance to express their ideas and opinions on issues that are important to them, respondents provided a number of suggestions, including using questionnaires and internet-based media for gathering opinions, and having meetings where young people can provide their opinions.

"The government is building our future. The least they could do is ask our opinions on it. We have to live the way that they are planning once they are gone, so why not ask us and make the future more achievable."

Respondents also expressed that it is important for their opinions to be listened to with respect, for young people to be encouraged to voice their opinions, and be provided with information on how to effectively communicate their opinions.

"People could learn to not judge all teens by what they look like and by how some teens act. Not all teens act the same way, but many people still judge us the same way, like we are all bad."

The responses to the questions regarding participation indicate that there is a gap between the importance children and youth place on participating, and the opportunities available for participation on issues that concern them.

Fair Treatment and Anti-Discrimination

According to the UNCRC, children and youth are seen as individuals with special rights and freedoms, who need protective care from being discriminated against or treated unfairly because of age, race, skin colour, gender, language, religion, political opinion, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status.

"A world without discrimination would be like a day in heaven for people who have to deal with it every day of their lives."

"Respect should be defined - people need to be able to recognize if they are treating people with respect or not, and how to deal with it."

Respondents were asked whether they felt children and young people were treated unfairly and whether society provides enough help to children and youth who are being discriminated against or treated unfairly. Respondents also identified the issues that were important to them in their responses to the open-ended question which asked for ways of ensuring the respect and non-discrimination of youth.

The responses show that the majority of young people in each of the three age ranges, feel that young people are *sometimes* treated unfairly (55% of children, 61% of pre-teens and 62% of teens). While 10% of children, 20% of pre-teens and 24% of teens feel that *yes*, young people are treated unfairly. When asked - *do adults help children and youth when they are treated unfairly or being discriminated against* - 81% of children, 73% of pre-teens and 48% of teens answered *yes* or *sometimes*. 50% of teen respondents reported that society *rarely* or *never* provides enough help from society when they were being discriminated against.

“Adults should always be there for us.”

Respondents provided a number of suggestions regarding ways to ensure that children and youth are not discriminated against and are treated fairly. For both children and pre-teens, listening and respecting young people

and their opinions was the response most often given. For teens, respect for others was the most popular response. Young people also suggested that children and youth should be treated by adults in the same way that adults would like to be treated. Educating the public about discrimination and the importance of adults understanding youth culture and terminating the stereotyping of teenagers were also common responses.

“Adults should not be so quick to judge just because something is different.”

From the responses to the questions about fair treatment and discrimination, and the previous questions on participation, it is evident that there is a need for children and young people to feel they are respected and treated fairly. This could be addressed, in part, through more meaningful opportunities for participation and by youth involvement in discussions on issues that pertain to youth, with special emphasis placed on teenagers who feel more discriminated against than children and pre-teens.

“The media also has a large relationship with how youth are treated. Maybe instead of showing only negative stories about youth, they should also air stories on how youth are changing their world for the better.”

Poverty: Food, Clothing and Housing

Children and youth have the right to survival. Components of survival include adequate food, water, clothes, and housing. Poverty can be defined as being poor without enough money for adequate food, water, clothes, and housing. It is a complex problem that is linked to other social and economic issues that are local, national, and global in nature.

Respondents were asked whether they thought young people have access to enough food, clothes, clean water and a safe place to live: is poverty a problem? They were also asked whether they felt that countries around the world should be responsible for ensuring that all children have access to basic needs, and to suggest ways of helping children who are living in conditions of poverty. The questionnaire did not differentiate between local, national, or international poverty.

“The child poverty situation in Canada is absolutely disgusting. NO Canadian child should live in poverty, but the figures show that as a prosperous industrialized nation, we are failing miserably.”

“We should make people aware of poverty. People have to know about something to make a difference.”

All respondents strongly indicated their awareness of the existence of young people who do not have their basic needs met. Only 6% of children, 13% of pre-teens and 7% of teens reported that poverty is *not* a problem or is *rarely* a problem for some young people. Most children (82%), pre-teens

(87%), and teens (84%) agreed that it is important that countries around the world be responsible for access to these basic needs.

To improve the conditions of child and youth poverty, the respondents most frequently recommended that people donate money to charity and participate in more fund-raisers.

“Provide subsidies, help the Children’s Aid Society, offer more after school programs, both at school and in the community, so as not to continue the poverty cycle.”

Young people also suggested that financial assistance, affordable housing, shelters and food banks should be increased with aid from governments in order to assist individuals in need, and that awareness of poverty and its effects should be increased. These responses indicate that children and youth see access to

basic needs as important, and identify poverty as a problem that affects children around the world. The responses also demonstrate that young people have an understanding of some of the underlying causes of poverty and potential interventions such as affordable housing and job training.

Peace and Safety

According to the UNCRC, children and youth have the right to live in a safe and caring environment, with protection from all forms of harm including violence.

“All children deserve to live in a peaceful and safe world.”

This category was directed at young people’s thoughts and opinions on whether children and youth live in places that are peaceful and safe; whether they feel that young people know who to ask for help if they are not feeling safe; and what positive things are available in communities to help keep young people safe.

“Enforcing bullying policies in schools and sending child molesters to jail are things that help keep youth safe.”

The largest proportion of respondents stated that young people *sometimes* live in an environment that is peaceful and safe. However, 16% children, 24% pre-teens and 24% teens reported that young people *rarely* or *never* live

in a place that is peaceful and safe. Most respondents identified that young people *sometimes* know who to ask for help if they are not feeling safe, however, 8% of children, 32% of pre-teens and 39% of teens *rarely* or *never* know who to ask for help.

Respondents expressed a number of positive actions and identified community organizations or community resources that help keep young people safe in their communities, such as police, firefighters, Neighbourhood Watch, Block Parents, Big Brothers and Sisters, and Crime Stoppers. Respondents also identified the importance of providing activities for young people and places for them to go and making schools positive and safe environments. Teens particularly recommended providing someone for young people to talk to, whether that be parents, adults, counsellors or someone at a help line.

"There are a few things that are done in society that keep children safe, like Block Parents and children's help centres, but I feel that there should be more places for children to go when they are in trouble so they know that they can be safe with a stranger when there is no one else to be safe with."

It is apparent that young people feel it is important for them to know who to turn to if they are not feeling safe, and that they have a safe environment in which to live, learn and play. In addition, young people identified the need for activities and access to resources that can help them to feel more safe - such as help lines and counselling. The responses to the open-ended question also provide a glimpse into some of the issues related to young people's insecurity such as bullying and family violence.

Environment

The UNCRC states that children and youth have the right to an education that fully supports their development to the fullest potential. This education includes learning about and having a respect for the natural environment.

"Earth is the only planet we could breathe and live in so far. We can't move on to another planet."

Respondents were asked whether they think that people respect the environment and help keep it clean and safe. Additionally, respondents were asked whether they think children and youth can make a difference by helping to keep the environment clean and safe, and how an unclean environment can affect young people.

The majority of pre-teens and teens strongly felt that most people *do not* respect the environment or help keep it clean. Children reported that people *yes*, respect the environment (15%) and *sometimes* respect the environment (39%). A high proportion of the respondents strongly felt that children and young people can make a difference by helping to keep the environment clean and safe (71% of child, 78% of pre-teen and 65% of teen respondents).

"People should think about their children and their future, not just about now."

When asked how an unclean and polluted environment affect children and youth, respondents in all the age categories provided a variety of answers, including that pollution causes illness and disease, and sometimes even death, and that it affects the health and future of children and youth who need a clean environment in order to reach their full potential. It is evident that young people feel that more needs to be done to protect their environment and that adults need to be examples for children and youth.

"An unclean environment creates a lower quality of life. A dirty environment affects everyone, whether it be frame of mind or views of life."

"An unclean environment has been proven to reduce youth's chance at being successful in life later on, and even if we can't do anything about the home we live in, we can keep schools and communities cleaner for everyone."

As well, the responses show that young people understand that the environment is a determinant of health, but that they do not have full confidence in adults to safeguard the environment for future generations. Young people see themselves as playing an important role in protecting and cleaning it up for generations to come. This topic represents an

opportunity for increased participation and involvement of young people in the decisions that are made, and could lead to young people becoming increasingly involved in environmental issues individually, within their families and households, schools and communities.

Other Issues

The final open-ended question asked young people if there were any other issues of concern which they would like to see addressed. As in all the open-ended questions in this questionnaire, the results obtained should not be seen as statistically accurate, as many respondents often gave multiple answers.

"Children are getting bullied every day and people aren't taking any notice"

"Bullying and racism are important issues that are not being treated strictly enough. There should be serious consequences for bullying"

Each age group had different priorities, with the variety of issues increasing as the respondents' age increased. Children identified the responsibility of parents to feed and keep children safe; poverty; violence; education; justice; and child labour as issues which they

"You must educate and enrich children's lives so when they are older, they have what it takes - education and money - to do something good with their lives and help society."

would like to see addressed. Pre-teens identified bullying and racism; children's rights; targeting government funding towards more appropriate issues; government assistance to stay-at-home mothers; teenage violence; depression; the provision of more help lines for children and youth; street kids; and helping to protect children in other countries. Teen priorities included gangs and violence in schools; the stereotyping of young people; the

importance of listening to children and youth; the high cost of post-secondary education; discrimination; and that children and youth should be safe from war, disease, violence and abuse.

It is evident in the responses to this final question that children and youth have interests in a wide variety of issues that impact young people. A number of responses relate to education issues and/or the school environment. The responses suggest that opportunities for increased meaningful participation and involvement in the decisions that are made which concern children and youth would be appreciated, and could lead to young people taking a more active role in the achievement and implementation of the goals set by our government and the United Nations Special Session on Children.

"I would just like to say thank you for letting my voice be heard."

Appendix A

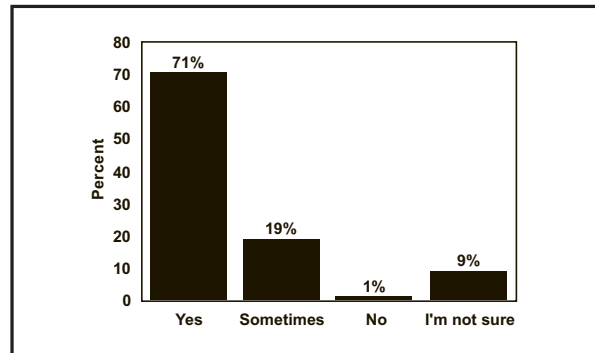
Graphs and Charts of Responses by Topic

Topic I: Participation — Question #1

“All of our opinions should be heard. Not ignored. We should have a chance to be heard. We should have the same rights as adults because we will soon have the responsibilities of taking care of the world.”

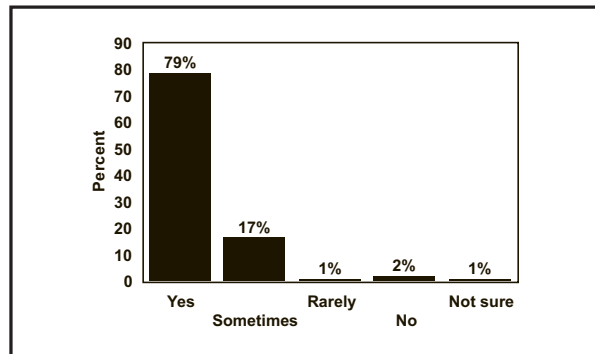
Children (5-8)

Do you think it's important that people listen to children's ideas?



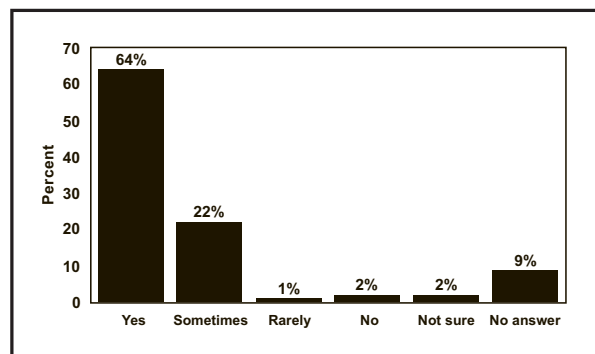
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think it's important that people listen to the views and ideas of young people?



Teens (13-18)

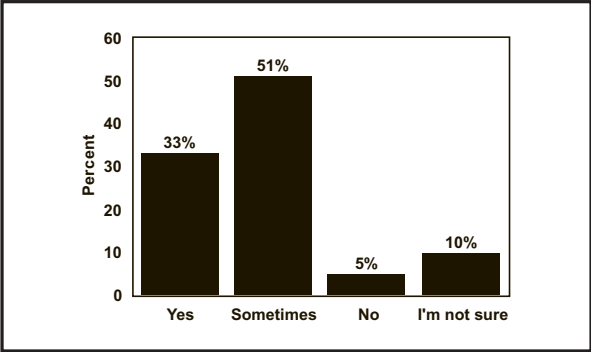
Do you think that youth should participate in making important decisions about matters directly affecting them, if they want to contribute?



Participation — Question #2

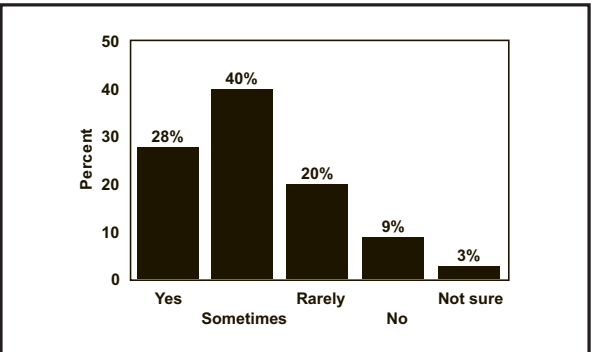
Children (5-8)

Do you think children are respected when they give their ideas on things that are important to them?



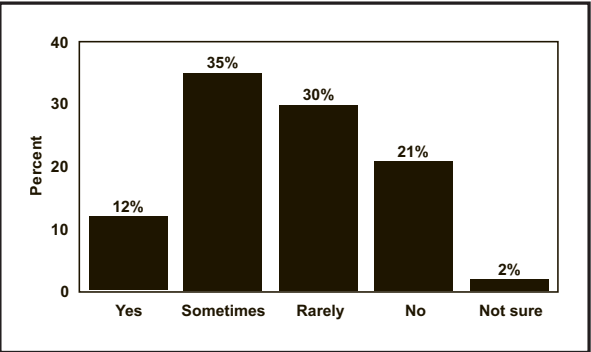
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think young people are respected when they give their opinion on things that are important to them?



Teens (13-18)

Do you think that youth are respected when they voice their ideas and opinions on things that are important to them?



Participation — Question #3 (Open-ended)

Children (5-8)

What are some good ways to make sure children have a fair chance to give their ideas?

Themes	%
Listen to children.	37
Let everyone have a chance to state their opinions.	25
Children should have the right to use their ideas.	20
Have meetings with children	10
Make a website like this one for children to share their ideas	5
Children should talk to their parents and teachers about this.	3

Pre-Teens (9-12)

What are some good ways to make sure young people have a fair chance to express their views and ideas?

Themes	%
Give children and youth a chance to speak, and listen to them	63
Encourage and make it appealing for children and youth to voice their opinions	15
There should be an organization to gather and recognize children and youth opinions	7
Children should be represented at meetings and gatherings that concern them	5
There need to be more questionnaires and questionnaires that gather children and youth opinions	3
Children and youth should write to politicians and the media about their opinions.	3
Children and youth should be interviewed for their ideas	3
A law needs to be developed that states that children have the right to be acknowledged	1

Teens (13-18)

What are some good ways to make sure young people have a fair chance to express their views and ideas?

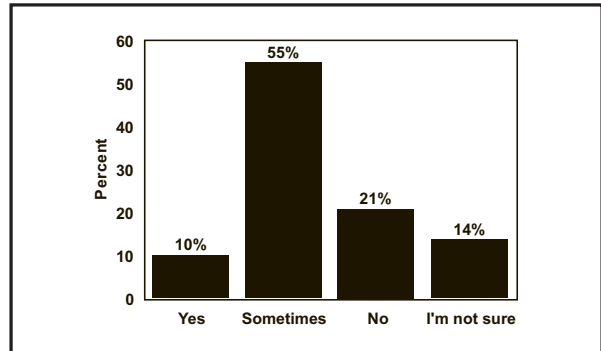
Themes	%
Listen to the opinions of children and youth with respect.	20
Create a good environment for participation	17
Children and youth should be encouraged to speak up	11
Hold conferences where children and youth can voice their opinions	7
Use surveys and questionnaires to determine the opinions of children and youth	4
Make participation more accessible through the internet.	3
Children and youth should approach local politicians through letters and in person	2
Establish nation-wide youth advisory committees that have access to adult decision making	1
Children and youth should know their facts and present them in a professional manner	1
Adults should take the ideas of children and youth and put them into action	1
There should be a child and youth representative in government.	1
National Child Day provides a good forum for child and youth participation	1
Children and youth should be provided with information on how and when they can get involved	1
No response	30

Topic 2: Fair Treatment/Anti-Discrimination — Question #1

“Some youth grow up in a closed environment. We have to work to open their minds so that they don’t look down on people who are different.”

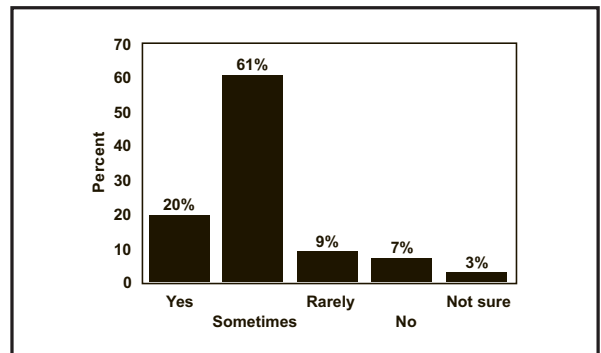
Children (5-8)

Do you think children are treated unfairly?



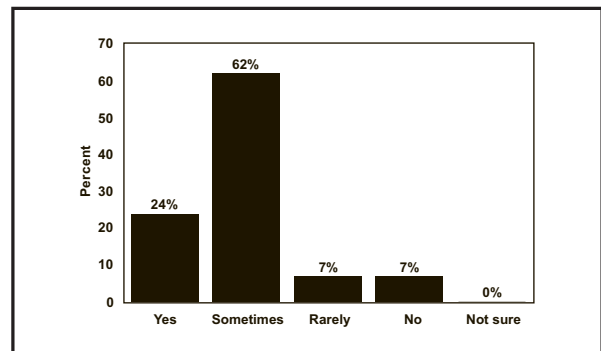
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think young people are treated unfairly?



Teens (13-18)

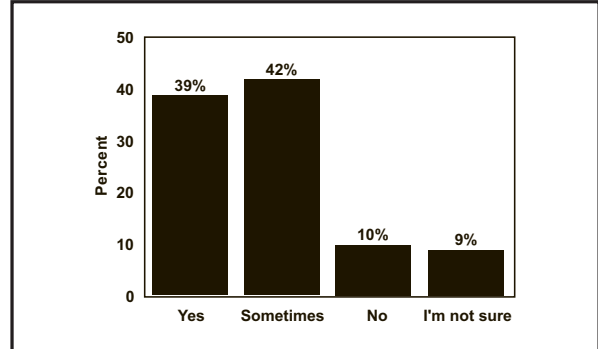
Do you think that youth are treated unfairly?



Fair Treatment/Anti-Discrimination — Question #2

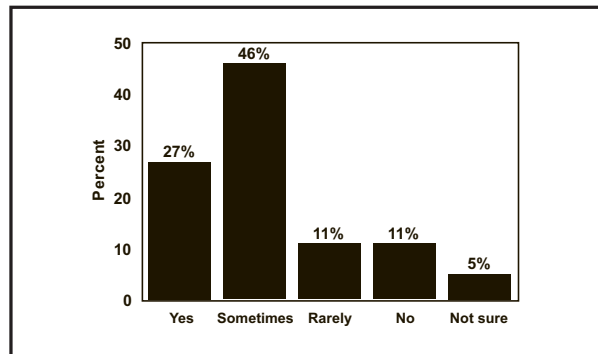
Children (5-8)

Do you think adults help enough when children are being treated unfairly?



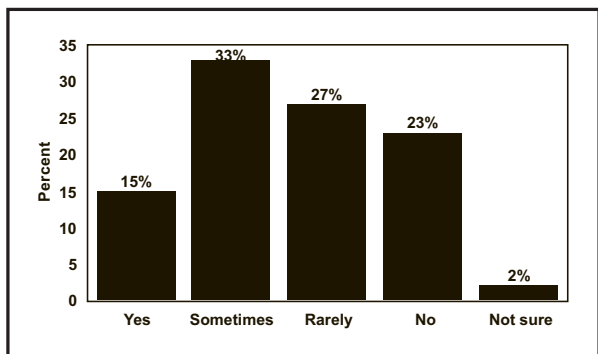
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think adults provide enough help to young people when they are being disrespected and treated unfairly?



Teens (13-18)

Do you think society provides enough help to youth who are being discriminated against?



Fair Treatment/Anti-Discrimination — Question #3 (Open-ended)

Children (5-8)

What are some ways to help make sure children are respected and treated fairly?

Themes	%
Children should be given respect	36
Listen to children's opinions	22
Let children make their own choices	14
See children as people with their own ideas and thoughts	11
Children should say what they feel	8
Everyone should look after everyone else	6
Provide children with help when needed	3

Pre-Teens (9-12)

What could be done to make sure young people feel like they are being respected and treated fairly?

Themes	%
Listen to children and youth and respect their opinions	45
Treat children and youth in the same manner you would like to be treated	24
Children and youth should be respected by everyone.	12
Bullying has to be prevented	6
Children and youth should feel they have someone to talk to who they trust.	5
Everyone needs to learn how to change	3
People should not be quick to judge someone else because they are different	3
Children and youth should not be afraid of the people around them	2

Teens (13-18)

What could be done to make sure youth are not discriminated against and are treated with respect?

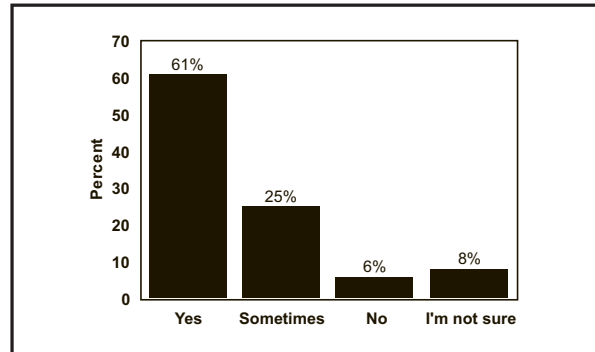
Themes	%
Respecting others should be enforced.	23
Have discussions about discrimination, and educate about discrimination	22
Stop stereotyping youth	22
Help adults to understand the culture of youth.	7
Children and youth should talk to teachers and other adults about safe practices	5
Listen!	4
Establish a law that will ensure the protection of minority groups	4
I don't know	3
Ensure that children and youth know their rights	2
Racist and discriminatory groups should be punished by law	2
There should be laws against age discrimination	1
Youth should be treated equally	1
Parents and communities should set anti-discrimination examples.	1
Children and youth should learn about other cultures	1
Secure futures	1

Topic 3: Food, Clothing and Housing/Anti-Poverty — Question #1

"I believe that the main problem with the phrase "child-poverty" is that it doesn't exist. Not in the sense that children don't live in poverty, but in the sense that it is parent poverty that puts these children in their situation. We need to address the problem of parent poverty: assist parents to become more financially able and then we will get rid of the problem."

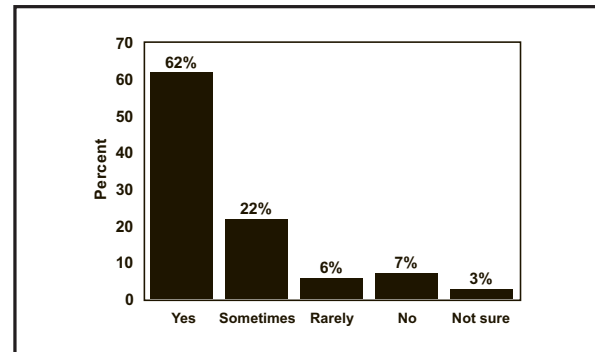
Children (5-8)

Do you think some children do not have enough food, clothes, and a safe place to live?



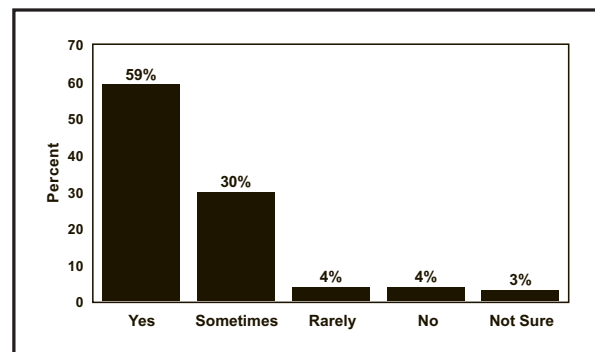
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think some young people do not get enough food, clean water, clothes, and a safe place to live?



Teens (13-18)

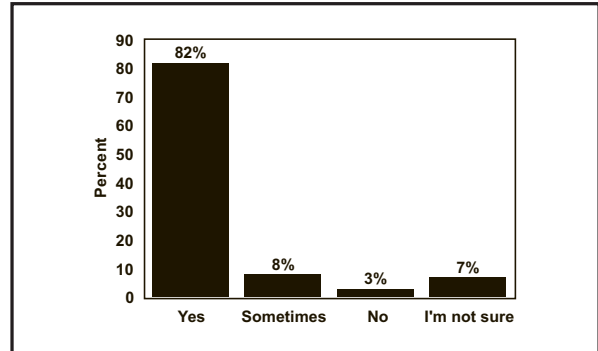
Do you think that poverty is a problem for some youth?



Food, Clothing and Housing/Anti-Poverty — Question #2

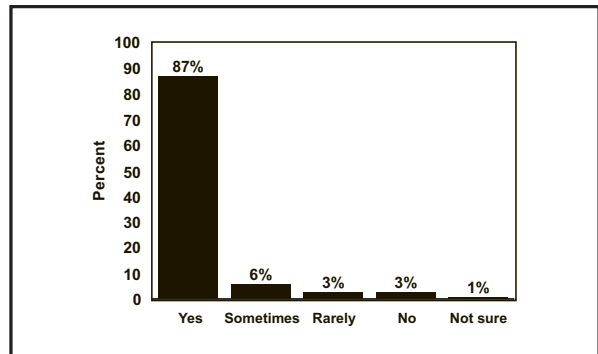
Children (5-8)

Do you think that countries around the world should make sure that all children have enough food, clean water, clothes, and a safe place to live?



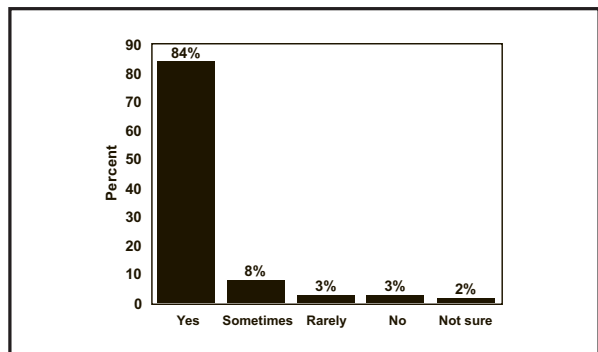
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think that countries around the world should make sure that all young people have enough food, clothes, and a safe place to live?



Teens (13-18)

Do you think that countries around the world should make sure that all children have enough food, water, clothes, and a safe place to live?



Food, Clothing and Housing/Anti-Poverty — Question #3 (Open-ended)

Children (5-8)

What can we all do to help children and youth who need more food to eat or clothes to keep warm?

Themes	%
Donate to charity.	38
Look after and help children and youth	8
Provide more shelters and food banks	8
Everyone should look after everyone else	6
Give money to their countries.	4
Build more houses.	1

Pre-Teens (9-12)

What can we all do to help children and youth in Canada who do not have enough food, clothes and a safe place to live?

Themes	%
Donate to charity.	52
Participate in food drives and fund-raisers	24
Government should provide more assistance to people in need.	15
More affordable housing should be built	8
Ensure that human rights are respected in Canada	1
Provide education and training to people who are on welfare.	1

Teens (13-18)

What can we all do to help children and youth in Canada who are living in Poverty?

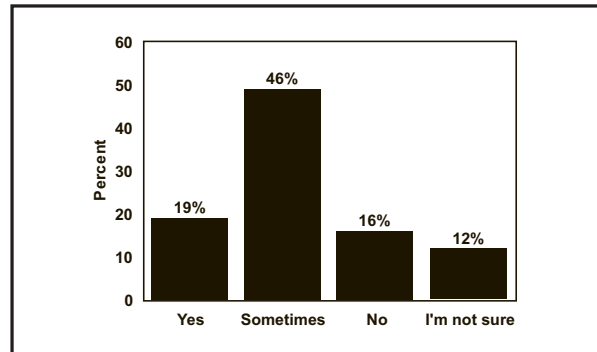
Themes	%
Donate to charity and participate in fund-raisers	46
Provide more shelters and food banks to assist individuals in need	18
Government should increase financial assistance to those individuals living in poverty	12
Help people help themselves by providing more jobs and training.	7
Provide more affordable housing	5
Increase awareness about poverty and its effects	4
Pressure the government to re-evaluate its social policies and programs	4
Increase financial assistance to developing nations	3
Provide education and training for individuals on welfare	1

Topic 4: Peace and Safety/Peace and Security — Question #1

“We like to be active. We like to play sports. If there is no clean place to do that, teens will be on the streets shooting each other.”

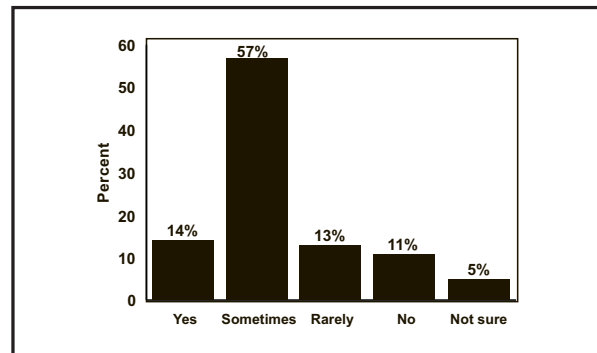
Children (5-8)

Do you think children live where it is peaceful and safe?



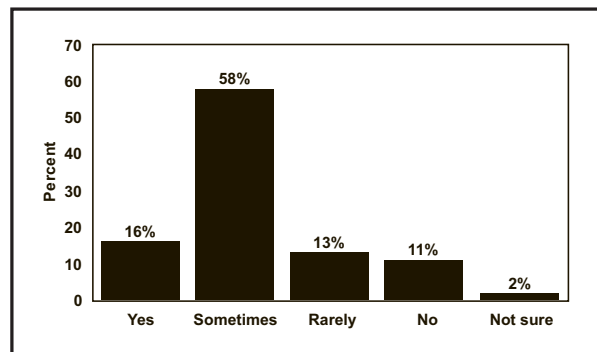
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think that young people live in a place that is peaceful and safe?



Teens (13-18)

Do you think that youth live in a place that is peaceful and safe?

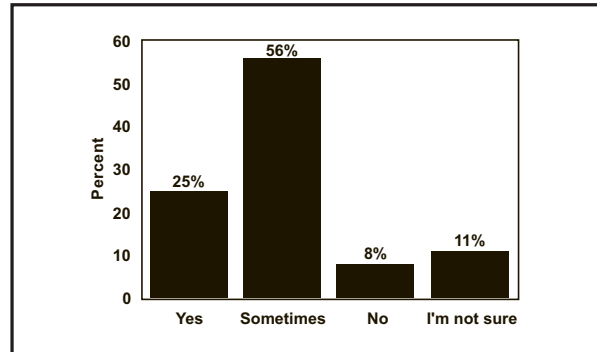


“There should be a safe place to sleep at night for everyone.”

Peace and Safety/Peace and Security — Question #2

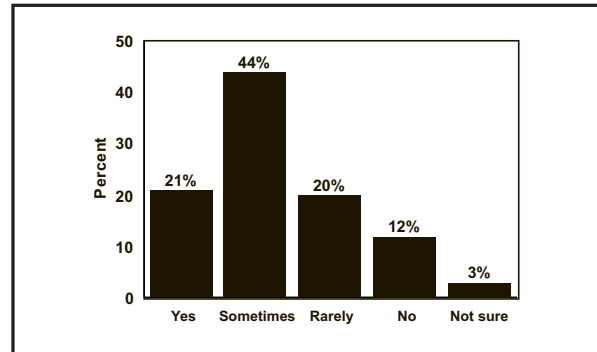
Children (5-8)

Do you think children know who to ask for help if they are not feeling safe?



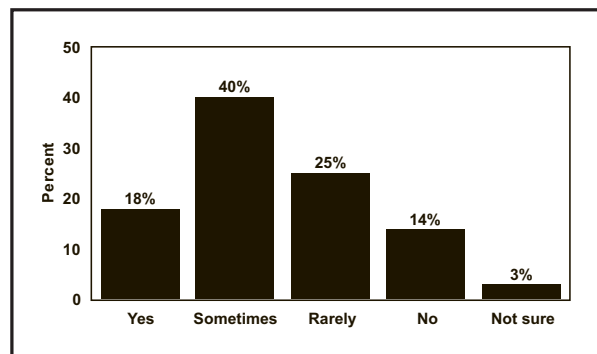
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think young people know who to ask for help if they are not feeling safe?



Teens (13-18)

Do you think youth know who to ask for help if they are not feeling safe?



“Make good schools. And make a whole big swack of kid’s help lines.”

Peace and Safety/Peace and Security — Question #3 (Open-ended)

Children (5-8)

What are some things that help keep children safe?

Themes	%
Police and firemen	21
Friends, families and teachers	21
Houses and shelters	21
Supervision	10
The importance of stopping war - children should not have to live with war	8
Block parents and Neighbourhood Watch	8
Bullying should be prevented.	5
Children should not talk to strangers	3
The importance of teaching children right from wrong.	3

Pre-Teens (9-12)

What are some positive things that society does to help keep youth safe?

Themes	%
Block parents and Neighbourhood Watch	48
Police, firemen and hospitals	22
The assistance of government and banks	8
Reporting unsafe activities	7
Provision of activities and sports for children and youth.	5
Prevention of guns entering schools	5
Teaching children wrong from right	2
Access for children and youth to trained people who they can talk to about their problems	1
Anger management programs for adults	1
Parks and playgrounds.	1

Teens (13-18)

What are some positive things that society does to help keep youth safe?

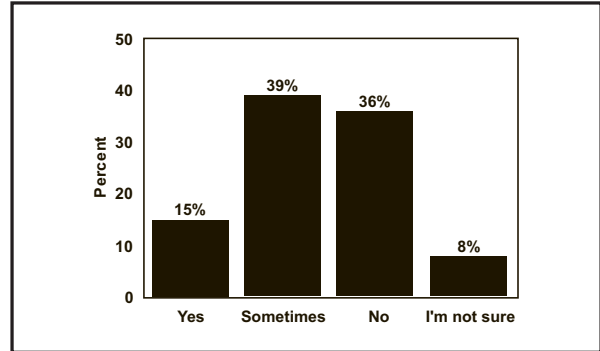
Themes	%
Provide someone for children to talk to, such as a help line or a counsellor.	25
Community organizations, such as Neighbourhood Watch, Block Parents, Big Brothers and Sisters, Crime Stoppers	20
Police	19
Provide more after school activities	16
Provide more safe houses for abused women and children	6
Establish more laws against youth alcohol use and smoking	3
Provide metal detectors in schools	3
Keep the public informed about safety issues	2
Make schools a positive and safe environment	2
Tighter gun controls are needed	1
Provide more and better healthcare	1
Provide more funding for youth-focussed organizations.	1
Address homophobia in the school system	1

Topic 5: Environment — Question #1

“Pollution affects us mentally. Living in an unclean environment makes you feel unclean mentally too.”

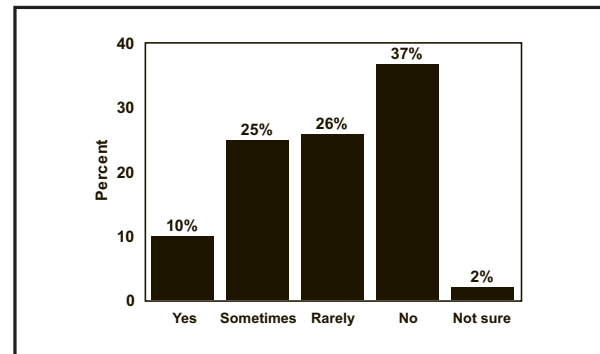
Children (5-8)

Do you think enough people respect the environment and help keep it clean and safe?



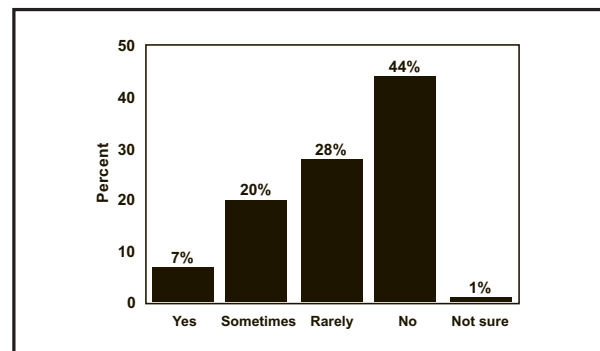
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think enough people respect the environment and help to keep it clean and safe?



Teens (13-18)

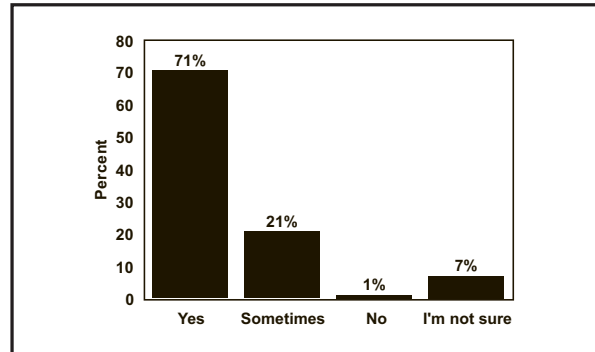
Do you think enough people respect the environment and help keep it clean and safe?



Environment — Question #2

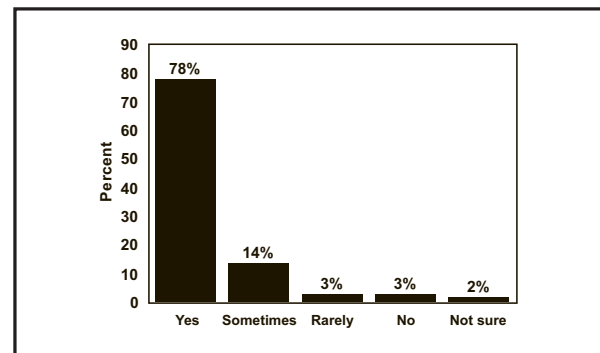
Children (5-8)

Do you think that children can make a difference by helping to keep the environment clean and safe?



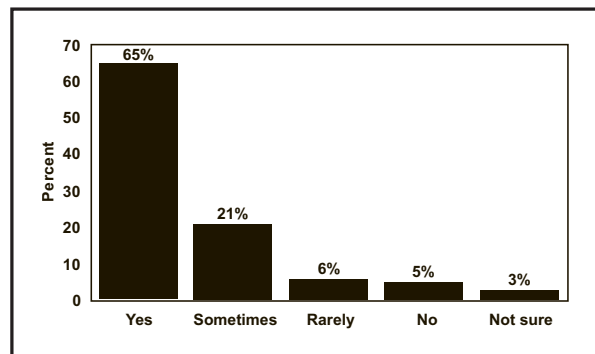
Pre-Teens (9-12)

Do you think that young people can make a difference by helping to keep the environment clean and safe?



Teens (13-18)

Do you think that youth can make a difference by helping to keep the environment clean and safe?



Environment — Question #3 (Open-ended)

Children (5-8)

How does an unclean and polluted environment affect children?

Themes	%
It makes people ill	58
It can kill people	11
Pollution makes it difficult to breathe	11
School children should help clean up the environment	8
It's not safe to play where there is pollution . . .	6
Pollution makes people sad	6

Pre-Teens (9-12)

How does an unclean and polluted environment affect young people?

Themes	%
It can cause illness and disease	36
It destroys their environment	17
It will affect the health and future of children and youth	16
It makes it difficult to breathe.	9
It can result in death.	7
Children and youth need a clean environment to function at their best	5
It can make children and youth stay inside. . . .	5
It makes children and youth uncomfortable . . .	4
There is not future for children and youth without a clean environment	2

Teens (13-18)

How does an unclean and polluted environment affect youth?

Themes	%
It can cause illness or death	40
Children and youth need a healthy environment to reach their full potential	25
Adults should set a good example for children and youth, and clean up the environment	11
We need to think of future generations and clean up the environment for them	9
We need to teach children and youth to respect and care for the environment.	6
An unclean environment can make children and youth stay inside, as oppose to going outside	4
We need to control emissions of gas	1
An unclean environment can affect wildlife and forests	1
We need to impose stricter controls on industrial emissions	1
Delinquent youth should help to clean up the environment	1
It is the responsibility of adults to clean up the environment	1

Final Question (Open-ended)

Children (5-8)

Are there any important issues concerning children that you would like to give your opinion on?

Themes	%
Parents should feed and keep children safe . . .	33
Help the poor	25
There should be more questions on education . .	8
Address violence	8
Smoking should be illegal	8
There should be more justice	8
Making children work for very low wages - lower than minimum wage	8

“Depression is a big part of young people’s lives today. Parents need to know if their kids are depressed and they need to get them help. If the do, then there might not be as many teenagers on the streets.”

“Suicide should have some light shed on it - disturbed kids that don’t know what to do or where to turn to, end up killing themselves.”

“I believe that more job opportunities should be offered. Employers don’t want to hire kids with no experience, but they don’t understand that they need a place to begin.”

Pre-Teens (9-12)

Are there any important issues concerning young people that you would like to give your opinion on?

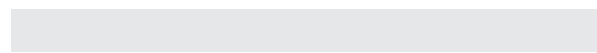
Themes	%
Bullying and racism should be addressed	22
Government expenditure should be directed towards appropriate issues	12
Children and youth should have the right to be children and youth	11
Government should provide financial assistance to stay-at-home mothers	11
Teenage violence should be addressed	7
The rights of children and youth should be enforced.	7
Depression in children and youth should be addressed	6
Fund more help lines for children and youth . .	5
Provide assistance to children and youth living on the streets	5
Protect children in countries other than Canada.	5
Factories should stop polluting	2
The attitudes of teachers should change	2
Food prices should be lowered	2
Develop organizations for children and youth that will be recognized and listened to by adults.	1
Transportation	1

“Anti-Discrimination has been mentioned but still we would like to put the emphasis on racism. Everyday, on every street corner, you can witness racism. In any form, whether by skin colour or religion. It is a matter that, in our opinion, should be seriously considered. We also believe that the government is doing a good job at trying to let us have our voices and opinions heard.”

Teens (13-18)

Are there other important issues concerning youth that you would like to give your opinion on?

Themes	%
Gangs and violence in schools	20
Stereotyping of young people	13
The importance of listening to teens - teens have things to say, but no one will listen	11
The cost of post-secondary education.	8
Discrimination	8
Children and youth should be safe from war, disease, violence and abuse	6
Favouritism in schools.	6
Child labour	3
The disparity between rich and poor	3
Youth access to drugs and alcohol	3
Facilitating opportunities for young people to voice their opinions.	3
Children and youth are starting to have sex at younger ages	2
Privatization of the healthcare system	2
Information about drugs and alcohol	2
Police unfairness towards youth	1
More thought needs to be given to child protection laws.	1
The importance of youth rehabilitation programs	1
More money from taxes should be given to families in need	1
Animal rights.	1
Concern for people living in poverty in Third World nations	1
A new education plan is needed	1
School closures	1
Teen suicide	1
Government policies regarding the rights of lesbians and homosexuals	1



“Violence. I think parents should spend more time with their children and there would be less problems of violence.”

“Minimum wage for students under 18 years is way to low to save for our university tuition. Students can’t work all the time. They have school. But if they aren’t getting enough money or sleep, school work fails. This means that I might not be accepted into a university that I have been saving up for because my marks are too low, because I’m working too much, because I’m not getting enough money with minimum wage this low.”

“I think that youth get treated very badly when they go into stores. The adults always assume that you’re going to steal something from the store.”

“Child protection seems to be lacking. Like if a child is being abused, they have to go through the trauma of going to an Agency just to be protected. The child has to be removed from the home, instead of the offender being forced out of the environment.”

“All children deserve the right to learn and the right to be safe. Canada is good at this, but not all countries are like Canada. Education should be given to all, and a safe environment. Safe from fighting, famine, disease, and abuse. Canada should also allow teens to go to college/university without having to worry about the great debt they will accumulate at the end.”

Appendix B

Questionnaires

Children (5 - 8)

Participation

1. Do you think it is important that people listen to children's ideas?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - I'm Not Sure
2. Do you think children are respected when they give their ideas on things that are important to them?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - I'm Not Sure
3. What are some good ways to make sure children have a fair chance to give their ideas?

Fair Treatment

1. Do you think children are treated unfairly?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - I'm Not Sure
2. Do you think adults help enough when children are being treated unfairly?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - I'm Not Sure
3. What are some ways to help make sure children are respected and treated fairly?

Food, Clothing and Housing

1. Do you think some children do not have enough food, clothes, and a safe place to live?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - I'm Not Sure
2. Do you think that countries around the world should make sure that all children have enough food, clean water, clothes, and a safe place to live?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - I'm Not Sure
3. What can we all do to help children and youth who need more food to eat or clothes to keep warm?

Peace and Safety

1. Do you think children live where it is peaceful and safe?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - I'm Not Sure
2. Do you think children know who to ask for help if they are not feeling safe?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - I'm Not Sure
3. What are some things that help keep children safe?

Environment

1. Do you think enough people respect the environment and help keep it clean and safe?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No
- I'm Not Sure

2. Do you think that children can make a difference by helping to keep the environment clean and safe?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No
- I'm Not Sure

3. How does an unclean or polluted environment affect children?

Final Question:

Are there other important issues concerning children that you would like to give your opinion on?

Pre-Teens (9 - 12)

Participation

- 1. Do you think it is important that people listen to the views and ideas of young people?**
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - No
 - Not Sure
- 2. Do you think young people are respected when they give their opinions on things that are important to them?**
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - No
 - Not Sure
- 3. What are some good ways to make sure young people have a fair chance to express their views and ideas?**

Fair Treatment

- 1. Do you think young people are treated unfairly?**
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - No
 - Not Sure
- 2. Do you think adults provide enough help to young people when they are being disrespected and treated unfairly?**
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - No
 - Not Sure
- 3. What could be done to make sure young people feel like they are being respected and treated fairly?**

Food, Clothing and Housing

1. Do you think some young people do not get enough food, clean water, clothes, and a safe place to live?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - No
 - Not Sure
2. Do you think that countries around the world should make sure that all young people have enough food, clothes, and a safe place to live?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - No
 - Not Sure
3. What can we all do to help children and youth in Canada who do not have enough food, clothes and a safe place to live?

Peace and Safety

1. Do you think that young people live in a place that is peaceful and safe?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - No
 - Not Sure
2. Do you think young people know who to ask for help if they are not feeling safe?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - No
 - Not Sure
3. What are some positive things that your community does to help keep young people safe?

Environment

1. Do you think enough people respect the environment and help to keep it clean and safe?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

2. Do you think that young people can make a difference by helping to keep the environment clean and safe?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

3. How does an unclean and polluted environment affect young people?

Final Question:

Are there other important issues concerning young people that you would like to give your opinion on?

Teens (13 - 18)

Participation

1. **Do you think that youth should participate in making important decisions about matters directly affecting them, if they want to contribute?**

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

2. **Do you think that youth are respected when they voice their ideas and opinions on things that are important to them?**

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

3. **What are some good ways to make sure young people have a fair chance to express their views and ideas?**

Anti-Discrimination

1. **Do you think that youth are treated unfairly?**

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

2. **Do you think society provides enough help to youth who are being discriminated against?**

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

3. **What could be done to make sure youth are not discriminated against and are treated with respect?**

Anti-Poverty

1. Do you think that poverty is a problem for some youth?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

2. Do you think that countries around the world should make sure that all children have enough food, water, clothes, and a safe place to live?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

3. What can we all do to help children and youth in Canada who are living in poverty?

Peace and Security

1. Do you think that youth live in a place that is peaceful and safe?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

2. Do you think youth know who to ask for help if they are not feeling safe?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

3. What are some positive things that society does to help keep youth safe?

Environment

1. Do you think enough people respect the environment and help keep it clean and safe?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

2. Do you think that youth can make a difference by helping to keep the environment clean and safe?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- Not Sure

3. How does an unclean and polluted environment affect youth?

Final Question:

Are there other important issues concerning youth that you would like to give your opinion on?